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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006257

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2014

TAGS: PREL MARR AF TU

SUBJECT: NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO ASK TURKEY FOR A PRT

REF: A. USNATO 983
 1B. ANKARA 4485
 1C. ANKARA 2293
 1D. ANKARA 5836

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) We read with interest USNATO's thoughtful piece on ISAF Stage Two expansion (ref a). While we agree that it would be beneficial to have a Turkish PRT in Afghanistan, any request to the Turks should not be made until after their February-August 2005 stint as ISAF VII commander, during which fall the Afghan parliamentary elections. Instead, we should focus on getting the Turks to send as robust a presence as possible for ISAF VII.

12. (C) The Turks felt burned in the last go-round of PRT force generation, and they are perplexed and angered by harsh Congressional criticism of their presence in Afghanistan given that they have provided the command element for ISAF once, are ready to do so again, and also offered a PRT only to have it turned down by the Alliance. They believe that they made a good-faith offer to provide a PRT in Takhar (in the northeast), and also believe that the U.S., the Afghans, SHAPE, ISAF on the ground in Kabul, and the Germans sent them many mixed signals on PRT placement (ref c). They restricted their proposal to areas already familiar to the GOT or private-sector Turks, and resisted efforts to locate their PRT in the Stage Two area. When we were finally willing to accept a Turkish PRT in northern Afghanistan, the Foreign Minister had already decided to withdraw the offer. Our attempt to convince the GOT to reconsider failed.

13. (C) The Turks have a large and capable military, but IMF requirements and budgetary reforms have placed real limits on their ability to pay for deployments such as commanding ISAF VII. The military was only reluctantly convinced to support Turkey's pre-Istanbul Summit proposal, and we expect they will be again reluctant to make the kind of long-term commitment a PRT entails. Certainly this will be the case at least until they have finished with ISAF VII. Depending on NATO's needs for ISAF VII, Turkey is prepared to send a Corps HQ element, HQ plus one battalion, or HQ plus two battalions (ref d). Given that the elections will occur on their watch, encouraging a larger presence seems to us to make sense.

14. (U) Kabul minimize considered.
EDELMAN